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LETTER DATED 10 MARCH 1992 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF BANGLADESH TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE
SECRETARY-GENERAL

Upon instruction of my Government, I have the honour to request you that the letter of 13 February 1992 of His Excellency Mr. A. S. M. Mustafizur Rahman, Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, addressed to you on Myanmar refugees into Bangladesh (see annex), may kindly be circulated as a Security Council document.

(Signed) Humayun KABIR
Permanent Representative

Annex

Letter dated 13 February 1992 from the Minister for Foreign
Affairs of Bangladesh addressed to the Secretary-General

For quite some time now, a large number of nationals of Myanmar commonly known as Rohingyas, who live in the Arakan province of Myanmar, have been crossing over into Bangladesh. By the middle of November last year this figure had, according to our estimates, exceeded 40,000. Seriously alarmed by this situation, which, according to the reports received from the refugees who had crossed over, was the result of systematic persecution of the Rohingya Muslims in the Arakan province by the Myanmar military, I decided to visit Yangon with a view to trying to peacefully resolve this problem through bilateral discussions with the Myanmar Government.

During my visit to Myanmar from 21 to 23 November 1991, I held detailed discussions with my counterpart, the Foreign Minister of Myanmar, as well as other representatives of the Myanmar Government. I was assured of their desire also to resolve this problem amicably and I was informed that the Myanmar side would be willing to accept the return of those persons whose credentials as citizens of Myanmar could be established beyond doubt. However, it is a matter of some regret for us to state that the flow of refugees continued without interruption.

On 21 December 1991, the Myanmar security forces launched a surprise attack on a border outpost manned by the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) located at Rejupara. In the attack, in which rocket launchers, mortars and automatic weapons were used by the Myanmar security forces, one BDR soldier was killed while six other BDR personnel were wounded. The Myanmar forces that launched the attack took away with them a total of 34 different types of weapons, as well as several other items from the BDR camp.

A protest note was handed over to the Myanmar Ambassador in Dhaka on 22 December 1991, as well as to the Foreign Ministry in Yangon on the same day, in which we sought the return of the arms that were taken away by the Myanmar security forces and sought compensation for the loss of life and property. We also sought an assurance from the Government of Myanmar that such incidents would not recur in the future. The Myanmar Foreign Ministry, while receiving our protest note, expressed "sorrow" and termed the incident as an "unfortunate" event. Our Defence Attaché in Yangon was told by the Myanmar defence authorities that the attack was on an insurgent group located inside Myanmar. On 23 December 1991, the Myanmar Foreign Ministry, in its reply to our protest note, rejected our account of the incident. Since then, there have been several meetings between the Bangladesh Ambassador in Yangon and the Myanmar authorities, as well as between the Myanmar Ambassador in Dhaka and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh. There have also been several flag meetings between the officials of the border forces of the two countries. Although almost all the weapons seized by the security forces have been returned to us, the Myanmar authorities have continued to insist

that the incident of 21 December 1991 at Rejupara was, in fact, an attack by the Myanmar security forces on an insurgent camp inside their own territory.

The incident of 21 December 1991 was accompanied by an arms build-up on the border by the Myanmar forces. As in the case of the refugee problem, the Government of Bangladesh's approach was to try and resolve this problem, as well as defuse tension on the border through bilateral negotiations. Whilst the tension on the border has been reduced, we have noted with growing concern that the flow of refugees, far from decreasing, has increased. According to our latest estimate, the number of refugees is now well over 60,000. The Government of Bangladesh, faced with this situation and moved by a deep feeling for the suffering of the refugees, has set up several camps where the refugees have been provided with food, shelter and medical facilities. However, given the limited resources available to the Government of Bangladesh in coping with such a major exodus, which has continued to this day, we are left with no recourse other than to appeal to you for assistance from the United Nations and the specialized agencies for help and assistance in providing shelter and relief for the refugees. We sincerely hope that it will be possible for you to arrange for emergency relief assistance to be provided to the Government of Bangladesh from within the United Nations system as soon as possible and also to launch an appeal to the international community for assistance for the refugees from Myanmar.

I would also like to request your good offices on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh in addressing yourself to the question of how best this flow of refugees may be brought to an end and to allow them to return in honour and safety to Myanmar.

I have also addressed a letter on this subject to the High Commissioner for Refugees. I have instructed our Permanent Representative in New York also to brief you in greater detail about the latest developments on the Myanmar-Bangladesh border, with special reference to the plight of the refugees from Myanmar. Recalling the very prompt and positive response that we received from the United Nations some nine and half months ago at the time of the disastrous cyclone which hit Bangladesh, I am confident that we can count on Your Excellency to mobilize the United Nations and the specialized agencies to respond to this terrible human tragedy which we are witnessing today on the Myanmar-Bangladesh border.
